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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GG](#) [UP](#) [MD](#) [AM](#) [BO](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: DFM KARASIN ON UKRAINE, GEORGIA, TRANSNISTRIA,  
ARMENIA AND BELARUS

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary. In a February 8 meeting with the Ambassador, DFM Karasin strongly cautioned against the Ukrainian government's push for NATO membership, underlining that a decision by the Alliance would be met with counter measures that would test our strategic relationship. Karasin urged the U.S. to steer the Georgian leadership toward responsible behavior in the aftermath of the Kosovo CDI and to follow the January 23 UNSYG's recommendations. Russia would not tolerate the GOG "feigning a normal bilateral relationship" with Russia while preparing its NATO MAP request. Ambassador pressed back, reminding Karasin of GOR responsibility for reducing tensions with Tbilisi. The GOR continued to believe, Karasin added, that the best channel for resolving the stand-off over Transnistria remained direct dialogue between Voronin and Smirnov, and the prospect for resolution had increased with Voronin taking a more constructive stance in recent months. The GOR expected Armenian Prime Minister Sarkisian to win the February 19 presidential election and was prepared to develop a dynamic bilateral relationship with Armenia during Sarkisian's tenure. Karasin forecast no major new developments in Russia-Belarus relations. End summary.

Ukraine: NATO Ripples and Mazepa Dispute  
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12. (C) On February 8, DFM Karasin told the Ambassador that the GOR was "extremely disappointed" with and "surprised" by the speed with which the new Ukrainian government had requested MAP and NATO membership. The GOR does not understand how and why the very first political act by the GOU had to be about NATO, which Karasin characterized as an act of "fanaticism." The GOR, Karasin said, was dismayed and would be not be shy about airing its disappointment. "Who," Karasin asked, is threatening Ukraine?" Karasin gauged the GOU's decision as dangerous domestically for a country where the political process is still in flux. He emphasized that Russia would not consider a MAP offer as a "technical" step. It would be a strategic challenge with serious strategic consequences.

13. (C) The Putin - Yushchenko Intergovernmental Commission meeting will convene in Moscow on February 12, without Tymoshenko's participation. Karasin thought that Ukraine and Russia needed to focus on economic cooperation. He criticized the GOU's misdirected efforts to re-invent history. According to Karasin, as in the cases of Holodomor and Roman Shukevich, the GOU is misinterpreting history by creating a national hero out of a questionable figure like Ivan Mazepa, who was a "traitor."

Georgia: NATO Ripples and Kosovo  
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14. (C) Karasin affirmed that two Georgian DFMs -- Vashkidze and Vashadze -- are due in Moscow next week, and that the GOR expected Saakashvili at the February 22 CIS informal summit, which would be followed by new FM Bakaradze's maiden visit. Karasin warned against what he described as a possible Georgian smoke screen of conciliatory words and a flurry of visits followed by the offer of a NATO MAP in Bucharest. Ambassador pressed back, reminding Karasin of GOR responsibility for reducing tensions with Tbilisi. Karasin repeated that a MAP offer would be seen strategic, and would affect not only Russia-Ukraine and Russia-Georgia relations but also Russia's partnership with the U.S. Karasin added that the scale of Russian reaction is difficult to predict but would have major implications.

15. (C) Per Karasin, FM Lavrov during his January 20 visit to Tbilisi, repeatedly told the Georgian leadership that the fastest route to resolving the frozen conflicts was to convince Abkhazia and South Ossetia to join Georgia by making Georgia more attractive to them, rather than threatening forceful reintegration. Although he did not expect a radical GOR move after the Kosovo CDI, considering both Abkhazia and South Ossetia are waiting nervously for the eventual date of Kosovo's independence, Karasin could not exclude unexpected new developments. Georgia, he argued, had not taken UNSYG Ban's January 23 statement on Georgia seriously. The GOR on the contrary thought it was on the right track. Karasin promised to work with the Abkhazians, while requesting the U.S. to urge the Georgians to behave responsibly.

16. (C) With the Group of Friends meeting scheduled in Geneva for February 18-19, the Abkhazia negotiation process may resume, while the situation in South Ossetia is more tense. Karasin saw the absence of "adventurism" in the region during the December election campaign in Georgia as a good sign. He

hoped that Saakashvili's weakened mandate may make him behave more reasonably. The Ambassador pointed out that Kosovo would make its decision shortly. He urged the GOR to work with Serbia to preserve stability in the region in order to avoid the concept of the zero-sum game as Serbia's political and economic ties with Russia and Serbia's EU membership could go hand in hand.

#### Transnistria: Better Prospect

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17. (C) Karasin praised the new OSCE HOM Remler for his good grasp of the situation and the ability to find a common language with all involved parties. He thought the Romanian government's aggressive Moldova policy has been helpful in pushing Voronin to take a more constructive stance. Against his habit and reflex, Voronin has to accept Smirnov as a partner on equal footing, Karasin added. Asked by the Ambassador whether any resolution could be expected anytime soon, Karasin answered, "no artificial deadline but the prospect is good for the resolution by the end of 2008."

#### Armenia: Getting Ready for Sarkisian

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18. (C) Karasin considered Sarkisian, a "strong and confident" leader who will win in the first round. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict may have a better chance for resolution during his presidency. The GOR is ready to develop a dynamic relationship with Armenia, which would much benefit from cooperation with Russia in the transport and energy sectors.

#### Belarus: Status Quo

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19. (C) Karasin reported no development on the union state between Russia and Belarus. The GOR continued to support Belarus by demonstrating solidarity against the sanctions imposed on it. A longer-term policy was necessary for Belarus, Karasin thought, and it was an area where Washington could exert leadership, and perhaps set the direction for

other nations. Ambassador said that's what we intended to do  
-- although it might not be the direction sought by Russia.  
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